

Earhart Died as Spy In Prison, Paper Says

NAPA, Calif. (AP)—Amelia Earhart, the aviatrix who disappeared mysteriously in the South Pacific in 1937 died as a U.S. spy on a Japanese-held island, according to a copyright newspaper story.

The Napa Register said yesterday that the pioneer woman flier was captured by the Japanese on Saipan while she completed an intelligence mission to inspect and photograph fortifications on Pacific Islands.

Her body and that of navigator Frederick Noonan were secretly returned to the United States in 1944, according to the report. The newspaper said Miss Earhart died of dysentery and Noonan was beheaded.

Story Is Questioned

A State Department spokesman in Washington said its files showed no evidence that Miss Earhart was on an intelligence mission or that she was captured by the Japanese.

The official version of Miss Earhart's disappearance is that her plane apparently went down between Lae, New Guinea, and Howland Island, on the first leg of a flight to Honolulu and Oakland, Calif.

The Register said it based its conclusion that Miss Earhart was on an espionage mission upon scrutiny of "classified files in the Department of the Navy and the Department of State."

Known to Natives

The report cited "scores of natives" on the island who told Frederick Goerner of Radio Station KCBS in San Francisco of a white man and woman being held captive by the Japanese.

Goerner launched the investigation in 1960 and was joined by the Register three years ago.

One woman was quoted as saying: "The woman the Japanese called the flier died of dysentery. She could not be helped. The man who came to the island with her was executed several days after her death. The Japanese beheaded him with a Samurai sword."

According to the Register, two former U.S. Marines, Everett Henson Jr. of Sacramento, Calif., and Billy Burks, now living in Texas, found the remains of two bodies on the island in 1944.

When they asked a supervising officer "What are we looking for," the newspaper said, he replied, "Have you ever heard of Amelia Earhart?"